

Pre-Visit Assignments for Books

The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles

Accelerated Reader: Reading level: 4.4/Interest level k-3/points 0.5

Ruby Bridges was denied access to social development, to education, and to a healthy self-image as she attempted to integrate New Orleans Public Schools by attending William Frantz Elementary School. Bridges was only six-years-old when her parents responded to a call by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and volunteered their daughter's participation in the impending integration. Through this process, Bridges observed many injustices that she as a child could not understand.

Assignment: Write a letter to the 1960 New Orleans Parish School Board persuading the board to help Ruby and others integrate public schools in New Orleans or write a thank you note to Ruby's teacher, Mrs. Henry for being a fair and just teacher to Ruby.

Heroes for Civil Rights by David Adler

Accelerated Reader: Reading level 6.6/Interest level 2-5/points 1.0

There are countless individuals that participated in the civil rights movement. In *Heroes for Civil Rights* several activist are introduced such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Fred Shuttlesworth, and The Little Rock Nine.

Assignment: After reading *Heroes for Civil Rights*, draft a list of at least five additional civil rights leader's you might include on Adler's list. As a class, decide on only five civil rights leaders and be prepared to defend your decision. Once the list is complete, each person in the class must choose one from the new list, conduct research and write a biography on that individual.

Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges

Accelerated Reader: Reading level 5.9/Interest level 4-7/points 2.0

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Assignment: In the early 1930s, Charles Hamilton Houston, an African-American attorney traveled across the South collecting data on the conditions of both colored and white schools. In 1935, he planned a campaign to end segregation in education. Conduct Internet research on Charles Hamilton Houston and his work across the South, his involvement with the NAACP and *Brown v. Board of Education*. Create a five slide PowerPoint presentation and submit the results to the class.

Students on Strike: Jim Crow, Civil Rights, Brown, and Me a Memoir by John A. Stokes
Accelerated Reader: Reading level: 7.0/Interest level 5-9/points: 4.0

In *Students on Strike*, Stokes provides a firsthand account of America's segregated school system and his struggle for equality. While attending high school in Prince Edward County, Virginia, a decision was made to take a stand. Stokes recalls what Fannie Lou Hamer said in 1964, "You don't run away from problems, you just face them" Knowing that the schools for colored and whites were unequal, the students at Robert Russa Moton High School did just that. For example, Robert Russa Moton High School was built for 180 students when the doors opened it were already overcrowded with 220 students.

When his classmates went on strike in 1951, there were more than 450 students attending the high school. A student committee planned and executed a strike for better conditions, a strike that made Stokes a plaintiff in the landmark civil right case *Brown v. Board of Education*. In addition, much of what we know about the civil rights movement was viewed through television and the newspaper. Today much of what we know is through our access of the Internet.

Assignment: After reading Chapter 3, "School Days" pg. 18-21. Describe your school to someone unfamiliar with your specific school. What are you most proud of and are there any needed improvements?

Assignment: After reading *Students on Strike*, go to C-Span Video Library at <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/TheEvol> and watch the video Black History: the Evolution of Rights (Feb. 19, 2009) that features Frank Smith and John Stokes. Using the Socratic Method have students:

- The increased power of the Internet?
- How could someone use the Internet to fight known discrimination in education in many present public schools?

Warriors Don't Cry by Melba Pattillo Beals

Accelerated Reader: Reading level 6.5/Interest level 9+/points 9.0

In 1957, Melba Pattillo turned sixteen and became a warrior on the front lines of a civil rights firestorm. Following the landmark 1954 Supreme Court ruling, *Brown v. Board of*

Education, Melba was one of nine teenagers chosen to integrate Little Rock's Central High School. Throughout the harrowing ordeal, Melba was taunted by her schoolmates and their parents, threatened by a lynch mob's rope, attacked with lighted sticks of dynamite, and injured by acid sprayed in her eyes. But through it all, she acted with dignity and courage, and refused to back down.

Assignment: Even today many teenagers are warriors as they too face being taunted, threatened, and attacked by schoolmates. Today we call this bullying. As a class, discuss the following questions: Do you know someone that is bullied? Describe how the person is being bullied? Do you try to help the student? How can you help students who are being bullied? If no one helps a student that is being bullied what can happen to that individual?

True Fires by Susan Carol McCarthy

Accelerated Reader: Reading level 6.2/Interest level 9+/points 12.0

After the death of the mother, the Dare family moves to Florida to begin a new life in the citrus groves, but they are told the family's physical features are too "black" to attend the all-white school.

Assignment: As a class, discuss the following questions: How does race shape the way we see ourselves and others? To what extent do our ideas about race influence the choices we make? What are the consequences of dividing people by race? How can individuals and groups in a democracy organize to correct injustices?

Mississippi Trial, 1955 by Chris Crowe

Accelerated Reader: Reading level: 5.5/Interest level 7-12/points 9.0

At first Hiram is excited to be visiting his favorite grandfather in Greenwood, Mississippi. But before long Hiram begins to feel that the small town is not the place he remembers from his childhood. Then he crosses paths with Emmett Till, a black teenager from Chicago who is also visiting for the summer, and Hiram sees firsthand how the local whites mistreat blacks who refuse to "know their place," when Emmett's body is found floating in a river, Hiram is determined to find out who could do such a thing. But what will it cost him to know?

Assignment: Until the 1960s and 1970s, many states had laws that required segregation—the required separation of people by race. Although those laws no longer exist, their legacy still shapes the way many people view themselves and others. Ask students what they know about segregation. How is segregation related to race and racism? Record their ideas on the board.

Create a poem describing your experiences with segregation and its legacies. What do those experiences add to your understanding of the term? How can we as individuals and as members of a community overcome the legacies of segregation?

Simeon's Story: an Eyewitness Account of the Kidnapping of Emmet Till by
Simeon Wright & Herb Boyd.

Reading level 5/Interest Level 7-12/points 9.0

“The brutal murder of Emmett Till was a tragic moment in American history, but it helped to spur the great civil rights movements. In *Simeon's Story*, Simeon Wright corrects and clarifies many of the myths, lies, and misinformation surrounding his cousin's death. And it is my hope that the book renews our efforts to deal with the nation's lingering inequities, particularly the hundreds of unsolved murder cases from the civil rights era.”

Rev. Al Sharpton, President of the National Action Network

Assignment: There are many unsolved murder cases from the civil rights era. Conduct Internet research locating one of the many unsolved murder cases. Research the slain activist and present your findings to the class in a five slide PowerPoint presentation.